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Prepared for Crises

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Special to The New York Times.

WASHINGTON, Aug. 29—

Although only 43 years old, Roger Hilsman has been a successful guerrilla leader in Burma, a scholar with a doctorate from Yale, an intelligence specialist and a diplomat. Now, as Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, he draws

Man
in the
News

constantly on his diverse talents and experience in dealing with the crisis in Vietnam. A restless, bouncy, aggressive but deeply reflective man, Mr. Hilsman, as soldier-scholar-diplomat, is in the best multi-talented Renaissance tradition, with the added advantage that his skills and interests are attuned to the age of nuclear power and guerrilla warfare.

His talents and attributes—practical, intellectual and philosophical—presumably come in handy as Mr. Hilsman directs from his corner office on the sixth floor of the State Department the policy maneuvers of the United States in Vietnam.

Essentially, Vietnam is a guerrilla problem—eight years of South Vietnamese struggle against Communist rebels—and clearly a guerrilla expert was needed to supervise United States assistance in the jungle war.

Although the Far East and its problems range far beyond the jungle clearings of Vietnam, that is where the struggle is hottest, and Mr. Hilsman's wartime experience coupled with scholarly attainment made him an ideal candidate for the Far Eastern job. So President Kennedy tapped him for it, taking him from his post as director of the State Department's intelligence and research operation.

Joined Merrill's Marauders

Born at Waco, Tex., Nov. 23, 1919, the son of an Army Colonel, Mr. Hilsman went to West Point. After graduating in 1941, he immediately left for the Far East. There he soon joined the famous Merrill's Marauders of World War II—the forerunner of today's special forces. He rose to the rank of Major and was wounded with the Marauders. From that outfit he moved to the Office of Strategic Services and the command of a guerrilla battalion operating behind Japanese lines.



Associated Press

Expert on guerrilla war

In 1945 he led a parachute rescue mission that liberated American prisoners in a Japanese Army camp near Mukden, Manchuria. Among the first to be freed by Major Hilsman was his father, Col. Roger Hilsman, who had been imprisoned in the Philippines three years earlier.

For three years after the war, Mr. Hilsman worked for his Ph.D. degree at Yale. Then he joined the State Department to assist in planning for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in London.

In 1953 Mr. Hilsman declined

academic robes again to teach international politics at the Center for International Studies at Princeton. Three years later he appeared in Washington as deputy director of the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress.

Subsequently he wrote several books, including "Strategic Intelligence and National Decisions," which was recently chosen for the permanent White House library.

With President Kennedy's election, Mr. Hilsman was brought into the Administration and immediately became a key foreign policy planner, alternating desk work and field trips. Mr. Hilsman has since been operating day and night in ever-succeeding crises without ever losing his bounce and humor. This year he declined a full professorship at Yale to continue his hectic government activities.

His eyeglasses give Mr. Hilsman a slightly professional air. Talking with his staffers or visitors, he moves with bounding stride through his office from his desk to his bookshelves to a leather couch that serves as an emergency bed and back to his desk.

He is married to the former Eleanor W. Hoyt, whose birthday he will help celebrate tomorrow in the midst of the latest crisis. They have four children.

Mr. Hilsman enjoys relaxing with his friends, of whom there are many, but he has little time for interests outside the office. Except for mountain hiking, the ones he does indulge in are for the most part centered on the home.

He tries to keep up with his writing and scholarly pursuits and he also likes to design and build toys for his children. He once planned and built a Victorian doll house and furnished it in minute detail.

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